“Our SCHOOLS, Our CHILDREN, Our FUTURE”

by Rabbi Joseph Polak

Nothing is more fundamental in the system of Torah-based beliefs than free choice. The options are laid-out: here is truth; G-d says, here is falsehood; here is good, here is evil; here is life, here is death; yet — “therefore [you] choose life.” I’m recommending, G-d says, but I’m not imposing. The final choice, and therefore choice itself, remains utterly and involuntarily in our own hands.

Yet what happens when we make a wrong choice? What happens to us, of course, one piece of the question; equally interesting, it seems to me, is what happens to choice itself. It is possible that in making a bad choice, I tamper with my capacity to choose altogether. Thus, if I steal my neighbor’s bicycle, which looks like a hundred other bicycles, and which he cannot prove that I stole, I nonetheless severely hamper my choices with respect to any subsequent relationship with him. I am no longer able to select the full range of choices other people have with their neighbors: I can no longer count on him in an emergency, nor even borrow a cup of milk from him.

As with stealing, so with other kinds of sins: they narrow our world and severely limit our options, including our options to choose. Perhaps this is what Cain meant when he exclaimed, “My sin is greater than I can bear.” Murdering his brother transformed him into a fugitive from all of civilization, and imprisoned him in a life of so few choices that it no longer seemed worth living. Another way of saying this is that if, as a result of my sin, I believe myself to be a wicked man, I will lose my desire — my faith in myself — to do good. The corrective the Torah offers for such a debacle is teshuvah, or repentance. It is teshuvah that frees us from the imprisonment that comes from sin; it is teshuvah that restores us to the life of choice. If I return my neighbor’s bicycle with new tires and a big, if embarrassed, apology, he really has to allow me back as a player in his life.

There is a great Talmudic teaching regarding echetah ve-ashuv. One who sins, saying “I will sin now and seek forgiveness afterwards,” is in fact not forgiven. The great Chasidic master Sefat Emet explains as follows: When I say that I will sin now and repent later, I am making a mockery of forgiveness — what I am destroying is the process of repentance itself, and it is this destruction that is unforgivable. Unforgivable, I would argue, because it sabotages the restorative nature of teshuvah, its capacity to return life’s choices back to us. Without choices, it goes without saying, we are not people. To destroy teshuvah is to destroy our humanity.
I recently confronted fifty students I knew with the following scenario: Your friend Ed is working at the campus copy center. He calls you from there saying, "You know the physics test you're taking tomorrow? I just copied it for your professor. For a hundred bucks it's yours. Interested?" Of the fifty, only twenty-five saw a moral problem with Ed's offer, and of these only one was prepared to tell Ed off. Alas, I was not startled by this discovery. I already knew that most young people today do not believe that anyone can do anything wrong; they believe that anything a person chooses to do is right for him. A thing is right, they feel, if you believe it to be right. No one is ever to be told that they are wrong, only that you or I might believe differently from them. Such a value system can go a long way in explaining why no one objected to the ideology of, and the arsenal collected by, the killers at Columbine High; it illustrates that we live in a world in which no one can be wrong, and in which there is therefore no need for teshuvah.

A conversation about all this with a friend resulted in the following email to me, which I quote in full, and which illustrates the same thing in another way:

The teacher was concerned that David was not learning to negotiate. It seems that in class he will accept responsibility for things [he has done wrong], and apologize... The teacher explained that [if a child apologizes for something he has done wrong] he will feel bad about himself, and it's therefore quite important to teach children to negotiate. Once David wrote his name on the back seat of the school bus. When confronted with the question, "Who wrote this?" David admitted to it, and to the absolute astonishment of both the principal and teacher, accepted the punishment for it.

If these observations are correct, then teachers in our schools are participating in a perverted form of tolerance: a faith that people can do no wrong, that when someone sins, it's because he's having a bad day, and that he ultimately has to be judged meritoriously. There is no need, in such a model, to reflect on one's own deeds, only on the circumstances that led one to do evil. Such a belief system expunges, for the most part, any process of moral accountability, and with it any compelling need for teshuvah. And when you get rid of teshuvah, the universe of choices left for the sinner to live in has become hopelessly constricted, and his capacity to correct his ways and to heal has virtually been canceled. Sooner or later the sinner will cry out, together with Cain, "My sin is greater than I can bear."

Yet I fear that this describes the condition of the majority of America's Jews, and even as I praise my students for visiting the sick and raising funds for the poor, so I chide them for not actively going after their friends who behave in ways that they never would. And I do not hesitate to claim that this is the toughest thing I have ever had to teach at the university.

Rabbi Joseph Polak is Hillel Rabbi of the Jewish community at Boston University and Chairman of the Halakhah Committee of the Boston Bet Din.
Fostering Integrity

When I am introduced at social functions as the executive director of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, some people smile kindly, gracefully excuse themselves and slip away. Imagining myself as a member of some sort of covert ethics police force, carrying a tape recorder in my purse and ready to report scandal in a single bound, amuses me.

I muse more often, however, about those new acquaintances who eagerly pull me aside and ask what I am doing through the work of the CAEC to help educate the employees they have in their banks, corporations, and law firms. They are concerned about their star new hires from Princeton, Harvard, and Stanford. It’s painfully obvious to them that smart and savvy executives are not necessarily ethical. They have seen too many stars who, in an effort to establish themselves, make their mark, become well liked and well known, compromise their integrity, in some cases more egregiously than others, and sell out.

Enron, Arthur Anderson, and Worldcom are now immortalized in the curricula of business schools around the country. But the toppling of corporate gurus and their empires is not the sole source of our crisis in professional integrity. A host of scandals have raised public concern about integrity. Teachers around the country are rallying to res-pend with a focus on character education. But perhaps the real character education needs to start with the adults who are showing young people precisely what integrity and lack of integrity look like.

When I work with K-12 teachers in schools around the country, I am reminded that the most powerful education in integrity and character comes not from a lesson, but from a life. Who are people of integrity? Mother Teresa and George Bailey — to move perhaps too swiftly from the sublime to the ridiculous — come to mind. They are the individuals we trust, we admire, we are attracted to, and we are eager for our children and students to come to know. Moreover, these individuals show us that genuine happiness depends less on our success, income, CV, and circumstances than it does on our integrity. Students often think that happiness is something you pursue in high school or after college..."As soon as I graduate from college then I’ll be happy. As soon as I launch my career then I’ll be happy. As soon as I get married then I’ll be happy." But they are mistaken. Happiness comes from within. It stems from our choices and commitments, our purposes and aspirations. Happiness is not about the external trappings of success — popularity, power, income, accomplishments, reputation, or image. It is a consequence of using our freedom well, making choices — academic, social, personal, and professional — that lead us along a worthy path. Integrity is about remaining true to this path and changing direction when good judgment and ethical obligation require us to do so.

A worthy path is charted through practical action; our day-to-day interactions, habits, and choices can sustain or undermine our integrity. How do we foster integrity in the professional world? In the same way we do in our private lives — by striving to be consistent and reflective about our responsibilities and obligations. For those who are concerned about the lack of integrity in the workplace, what follows is an incomplete but suggestive list of ten ways we can foster integrity anywhere.

1. Lead by example. There is no escaping it. Integrity is not something we can put on and take off like a smile; it is integral to who we are.

2. Reflect periodically on your motivations and commitments. Why am I making this decision? Why not cut corners or take the easy way out? Why go the extra mile to complete something well? Asking these questions can help us return to what matters most.

3. Remember that relationships matter. How do I treat the people with whom I work? How do I support or mentor new professionals? Think about the ways you could improve collegiality and morale.

4. Take the little things seriously. Promises, deadlines, and appointments count. If you tend to overbook yourself, be more realistic.

5. Don’t take yourself too seriously. Developing a good sense of humor is a wonderful way to regain perspective.

6. Put first things first. Certain things do take precedence over the bottom line. Professional decisions should be governed by principle — the demands of justice and intellectual honesty, for example — rather than expediency or self-serving goals.

7. Choose your attitude. We can decide on our response to the challenges we encounter. When should I respond gracefully and generously? When is moral indignation called for? We are free agents, giving direction to our lives. We need not allow ourselves to become objects or victims of circumstance.

8. Don’t protect yourself from failure. No one is infallible. Sometimes, mistakes, foul-ups and misunderstandings can be the most fruitful opportunities for growth. Acknowledge them, be accountable, and learn.

9. Be grateful. Most of us “stand on the shoulders of giants” who have mentored us personally and professionally. We are always indebted to the people who believed in us and gave us an opportunity to learn the ropes.

10. Dedicate yourself to your work. Sustain your commitment even when slogging through the tedious or challenging aspects of your work by stopping to consider its impact — large and small. Make your work a gift, hours of service for others.

Is integrity in short supply? Not necessarily. Integrity is about acting in light of who we are and what we stand for — and won’t stand for. What we need more than ethics police officers and tightly cast codes of conduct is to return to some very simple principles and practices.
From the TRENCHES

TEN WAYS to Promote HONESTY in Your School

1. Develop a school code of ethics. Distribute it to every member of the school community. Refer to it often. Display it prominently. Make sure all school policy reflects it.

2. When conflicts arise within the school or classroom, teach about discretion, tact, and privacy (as well as honesty) – and about discreetly informing appropriate individuals of the conflict.

3. Ensure students have a firm understanding of what constitutes plagiarism and of the school’s firm policy against it. But, more important, help them understand why it is wrong and shows a lack of intellectual honesty and justice.

4. After students have developed an understanding of honesty and academic integrity, consider instituting an honor system for test taking and homework assignments. Discuss the implications of such a system with a committee of representative teachers, students and parents.

5. While studying the lives of great men and women in whatever subject you teach, do not consistently avoid the subject of personal weakness – especially in the upper grades. A study of the person’s “whole” character can provide a powerful lesson in discernment and compassion. Consider a thoughtful discussion of the following question: “Can a person be ‘great’ [and good] and still have some character flaws?”

6. Admit mistakes and seek to make amends. Expect and encourage students to do likewise.

7. Follow through. Do what you say you will do. For example, administer tests when they are scheduled; don’t cancel at the last minute after students have prepared.

8. Illustrate integrity. Let students see that you meet the expectations of hard work, responsibility, gratitude, and perseverance that you place upon them.

9. Communicate openly with parents about appropriate ways they can help students with their schoolwork.

10. Remind students – and yourself – that character building is not an easy or one-time project. Fashioning our character is the work of the lifetime.

On the **HOMEFRONT**

Your **CHEATING** Child

by Judy Molland

"When all else fails... cheat," reads the promotional advertising for *Slackers*, a film that features college students. Well-known author Doris Kearns Goodwin admits copying several passages, as well as scores of additional quotations and paraphrases, for her book on the Kennedy family. Enron executives amass fortunes while their employees lose their retirement income. With models such as these pervading the news and entertainment world, is it inevitable that our youngsters will learn that cheating is the way to go?

**Why Children Cheat**

Surprisingly, such examples of dishonesty in society at large appear to have little direct impact on school-age children. According to high school principal Cliff Moore, who conducted an informal survey of his high school students, not many kids perceive the outside world as a model. They may be receiving our culture's subtle messages, but they don't articulate them as influences on their own behavior.

Fifth grade teacher Barbara Forster is even more emphatic: "My students don't make those connections to the bigger society beyond the classroom. Kids are very caught up in their own world, and that's really all that exists for them." So why do children cheat?

Experts agree that the reasons vary, depending on the age of the child. Younger children may look over another child's paper, but don't see this as dishonest, explains Darrell Rud, president of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Rud sees such behavior emerging in first or second grade, when students are given increasing numbers of worksheets and the level of difficulty can cause them to feel overwhelmed. The intention is not to cheat, but to keep up.

Conscious cheating starts around the age of 8 or 9, when children can conceive that they are taking responsibility for a piece of work, according to Joe di Prisco, co-author of *Right from Wrong: Instilling a Sense of Integrity in Your Child*. This coincides with the introduction of letter grades in many American schools, which may cause students to feel greater pressure to succeed.

As one fifth-grader puts it, "Your parents tell you not to cheat, and you know you shouldn't cheat, but you feel pressured because you also know that your parents feel that the grade is the most important thing."

As students move up through middle and high school, the pressure to succeed grows, coming not just from parents, but also from peers, from teachers and school administrators, and from the need to get into a good college. The general consensus after Moore's survey of his high school students was that "everybody does it at least once," and that makes it OK.

Children may also cheat to help their buddies (by giving a paper to a friend who is going to be suspended from the football team, for example) or they may even behave in dishonest ways because they believe the school doesn't care.

**How Students Cheat**

Just as the reasons for cheating vary, so do the methods. With younger children, cheating most likely takes the shape of copying another student's work. As kids get older and tests and homework build up, youngsters may be tempted to take shortcuts. Two students may agree to do half the assignment each and share their answers, for example.

When groups of students take the same test at different times, the group that has taken it first can tell the other group what to expect.

"Even though you know that you shouldn't listen, how do you ignore information that is being directly told to you?" says one fifth-grader.

This example underlines both the temptation to and the ease with which kids can share this kind of information.

Several middle- and high-school teachers we interviewed brought up the issue of writing. As Barbara Forster explains, children have to learn reporting and writing skills. Before her students begin a research project, Forster always talks with them about how to paraphrase an idea using their own words. In the lower grades, while young children are learning these skills, plagiarism may be inadvertent. In the upper grades, it is frequently intentional.

Internet plagiarism, in particular, appears to be a widespread and growing problem. High school teacher Christine Pelton recently found that 28 of her 118 sophomore students had stolen sections of their botany project off the Internet.

Educators around the country agree that technology has improved a student's ability to cheat. There are currently more than 20 so-called "cheat sites" on the Internet, where students can download an entire paper on their chosen topic.

In a 1999 study carried out by the Center for Academic Integrity in North Carolina, 75% of college students surveyed on 21 U.S. campuses admitted to some Internet cheating. Programmable calculators are another example of how technology is making cheating accessible to more students.

**Schools' response**

Teachers should respond swiftly and frankly to cheating, according to Karen E. Bohlin, executive director of the Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character at Boston University, and co-author of *Building Character in Schools*. "They should call a spade a spade," she emphasizes. "This is dishonest; this is taking someone else's work."
Teachers need to be more than “plagiarism police,” she adds, they also need to discuss the importance of respecting other people’s ideas, and help children aspire to honesty, taking pride in their own work, and experiencing the joys of learning.

When it is so easy to download a paper from the Internet, there has to be a compelling reason for students not to do these things. Educational experts agree that the real goal should be to help children develop the dispositions of mind and character that will stay with them for a lifetime, not just as practices for the classroom.

To help students understand what cheating is, elementary and middle schools often post specific lists: “You may call and ask a friend what the homework is, but you may not have a friend do that homework” or “Your parents can go with you to help buy materials for a project, or help you if there is something dangerous about the project, but your parents should not do the project.”

In most schools, the consequences for cheating are fairly standard: the first time a student is caught cheating, he receives a zero on that assignment and must have a conference with the teacher. In addition, there is a referral to the administration resulting in a meeting with all the parties involved. For a second offense in the same school year, the penalties get much more serious – the student may be removed from the class, receive a grade of “F” or become ineligible for extracurricular activities.

**Parents’ response**

If your child is caught cheating, you should consider yourself lucky, di Prisco says. “Now you have an opportunity to address the issue directly,” he explains.

Rud agrees: “If your child is caught cheating, my first piece of advice is to be open-minded and go and hear both sides of the story. Once you do, you may indeed find clear evidence that your child was cheating.”

Parents tend to be very embarrassed, and denial tends to be one of the first reactions, Rud explains.

Educational psychologists agree that it’s important for parents to recognize that the world will not end if their child cheats, but that it does get more serious if cheating becomes a pattern. They urge parents to try to discover and address their child’s cheating.

Di Prisco notes that there are many reasons to cheat, but ultimately only one reason not to cheat: integrity. “It’s a good starting point to acknowledge with your child that it’s hard to have integrity and that people make mistakes,” he says, adding that children need to have these limits made explicit for them.

“They know that cheating is wrong,” di Prisco says. “Every healthy conversation around plagiarism and academic dishonesty is really about focusing on the kid’s strengths. Kids want to do the right thing, but you need to connect the dots for them. Kids don’t want to misrepresent themselves, so you need them to see that this is exactly what they are doing when they pass off someone else’s work as their own.”

**Resources**


**When Your Child Cheats…**

- Be relieved that your child has been caught now, before his or her cheating gets out of hand.
- Don’t try to protect your child from failure. Make her accountable for her actions.
- See this as an opportunity for your child to learn and grow. Let him dwell on what he has done.
- Stay focused on what your child needs now. This is not about whether she is going to college or not.
- Set clear limits. Let your child know that you love him, but that he has made a mistake.
- Catch your child being good, and congratulate her on doing the right thing.
- Recognize that you may be encouraging your child to cheat if you focus exclusively on his grades. Remember, kids go to school to learn. You may want to shift emphasis away from results and on to the learning process.
BEFORE and AFTER...

Effects of the CAEC APPROACH

By Bernice Lerner

The CAEC enjoys collaborating with public and private schools—urban, rural, and suburban—from around the country. This article describes the outcome of some of our work with suburban school teachers.

"Character education is not a panacea," says Cindy Fleischer, a special education teacher at the Sunset Ridge School in Northfield, Illinois.

"It has not cured all ills. It has, however, changed the culture of our school. We see more kids able to take care of their own problems. And now that we have successfully implemented a 4th grade program and have begun to work with classes from the kindergarten through the 8th grade, I hope to see stronger, permanent change."

What is this change of which Fleischer speaks? What came before—and what do teachers and their students experience after—thoughtful character education takes hold in a school? Answers can be found in the CAEC’s time-tested approach. Emphasizing the fact that our character is revealed in the choices we make, the CAEC encourages educators to help young people develop sound judgment. Teachers begin by identifying those virtues such as courage, diligence, justice, and compassion which help students to engage in their academic learning more effectively and to develop positive relationships within the school community. Most importantly, teachers create “practice” opportunities for students to make these virtues their own. In the words of Aristotle, “we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions”—dispositions of character arise from the repetition of worthwhile activities. The CAEC helps teachers to see how existing curricula can be effectively mined for such lessons and activities, how character education is indeed integral to all that takes place in school.

From the summer of 1999 through the summer of 2001, Dr. Karen Bohlin, the CAEC’s executive director, and Deborah Farmer, CAEC associate, held a series of daylong workshops for teachers and administrators of Northfield’s Sunset Ridge District. They explained how character education is rooted in ancient philosophy, how it is ever relevant. They explained how virtues, unlike personal values and viewpoints, are noble qualities cultivated from within the individual. They offered practical strategies, illustrating how educators can consciously spur students’ moral development. And they encouraged the involvement of all staff and parents in prioritizing the virtues that support their school’s mission, to be highlighted, studied, and consistently practiced.

Before the workshops, Fleischer had focused on teaching social skills related to conflict resolution, such as listening and anger management strategies. After the workshops she tied her skills-building efforts to the virtues of respect, responsibility, fortitude, compassion, and cooperation. She developed a proactive approach to character formation in addressing problems of bullying, teasing, and social exclusion. Students had previously discussed the fact that bullying involves one side having a power advantage over another, that it occurs over time, and that bystanders are also culpable. Now Fleischer asks them to contemplate their choice of action. Students can identify virtues that help a person navigate various situations. It takes courage to stand up to a bully. It takes courage, cooperation, and wisdom to discern the difference between reporting and tattling, that is, to act justly. Thinking about how it feels to be bullied entails empathy and caring. And as Laurie Barry, a second and third grade teacher at Northfield’s Middle Fork School points out, children who hurt or frighten others “now stop in their tracks when asked, ‘do you realize that that behavior is bullying behavior?’”

Before the CAEC workshops, Fleischer would help students to identify emotions they felt in certain of their interactions. After learning about character education’s purpose she now discusses with students their capacity to make wise choices, informed but not governed by their feelings. She began to focus on virtue, with an emphasis on students developing and showing empathy. The word “respect,” for instance, opened a world of educational opportunity. Students could discuss the meanings of self-respect, respect for others, and the connection between respect and responsibility. Fleischer begins the school year by asking her students to develop the “top ten rules of respect.”
“When a child is unruly I now ask him or her, 'is that respectful behavior?’ Before I would have said the obvious, 'sit down.' By referring to the students’ sound rules, the responsibility to act respectfully becomes theirs.”

Like Cindy Fleischer, Beverly Isenberg, a first grade teacher at the Sickles School, and Pamela Davis, guidance counselor for the Sickles and Knollwood Schools in Fair Haven, New Jersey, also find that raising awareness and understanding of virtue, reflecting on choices made, and practicing right action make a difference. In August of 2001, they, along with several other teachers and a principal from their district, attended a CAEC institute. Subsequent professional development sessions with Dr. Bohlin enabled them to better grasp essential concepts at the heart of character education. They shared what they learned with parents and other teachers, increasing support for character education throughout their respective school communities. A character education committee facilitated the selection of ten virtues most relevant for their school community, to be focused on in accordance with the academic calendar. Davis describes, for example, how “perseverance is addressed more specifically in January, the mid-year hump, the point at which we need that push to sustain us through the rest of the year.”

“It is very effective. The kids have taken on the language. A student might say, 'I can't persevere.' A student might act disrespectfully. But a seed has been planted, they are more aware. When kids have the ability to express themselves, the frustration level goes down. Before, someone might have said, 'that person's a jerk.' Now, he or she can say, 'that person is being disrespectful,' and is able to describe what respect and disrespect look like.”

Isenberg describes how students at the Sickles School develop rules of behavior at the beginning of the year. When they have their “Writers' Workshop,”* in which they pen and then discuss reactions to books read, they often refer back to their rules. In their “school family” trust has been established, and students respect one another’s responses.

After the CAEC training, teachers from the Sickles School realized that worthy projects afford opportunities to “put virtue into practice.” A class that studied sea creatures will adopt and care for a stranded animal from Brigantine's Marine Mammal Stranding Center. A school-wide math program in which students are paired with buddies from different grades focuses on teamwork and cooperation. During the school-wide effort to collect money for UNICEF, Beverly’s class wrapped coins and figured out what could be purchased with pennies, e.g., vitamin A, inoculations, boxes of school supplies. “The Heifer Project,” in which students earn a quarter for every fifteen minutes spent reading, enables them to buy livestock to feed a poor village. Ten dollars goes a long way toward purchasing rabbits, chickens, and geese. (The most expensive source of food, a young female cow or heifer, costs $500.) “Kids have no trouble,” Beverly notes, “turning into virtues such as kindness, cooperation, and perseverance.” What follows, then, is contagious — Beverly hopes that the wider community will “catch on to what we are trying to do by raising money for good causes.”

Valerie Nee, a fifth grade teacher at the Bourne Middle School, in Massachusetts, admits that it took time after teachers and a guidance counselor in her school attended a CAEC Teachers Academy in 2000, to “get the action piece in.” The school was new and with over 800 students, in grades five through eight, those who attended the Teachers Academy knew they would have to start small. They discovered that virtue could easily be brought into their classroom discussions — through literature, social studies, and in-class writing assignments. When teaching about literary characters, Nee asked her students, “Would you like to have that person as a friend?” They loved reading George Washington’s Rules of Civility — which he wrote at age fourteen and which include rules such as “Let your conversation be without malice or envy,” or “Sleep not when others speak” — and then writing their own Ten Rules of Civility. After reading a poem about courage by Rudyard Kipling, they wrote poems about what they could do in their own lives to display courage. They interviewed their parents, asking them who they had looked up to when they were young, and who they currently admire. And the students wrote moving essays about people they themselves admire. Gradually, what was taking place in the classroom rooms of inspired teachers took root, and meaningful character education efforts began to spring up throughout the school.

Bourne’s Middle School principal began an awards program in which students are recognized not just for academic achievement, but for service to the community and for being organized and diligent. Respect, responsibility, and patience are continually reinforced. Nee tells her students that “it is what you do that shows your character.” Before the Teachers Academy, she felt herself to be a teacher who was sensitive to behavioral issues. After the intellectual, reinvigorating retreat she gained “focus and a classical framework.”

Teachers and school administrators who wish to deepen their understanding of character education will gain valuable insights and perspectives from Building Character in Schools (Ryan and Bohlin, Jossey-Bass, 1999) and the Building Character in Schools Resource Guide (Bohlin, Farmer, and Ryan, Jossey-Bass, 2001). Please know that you may also contact me about your specific professional development needs.

Bernice Lerner, Ed.D is the director of professional development for the CAEC.

The following “rules of respect” often make Cindy Fleischer’s fourth grade students’ “top ten” list:

1. Be responsible for other peoples’ property.
2. Be kind to the earth and other living creatures.
3. Be truthful and honest.
4. Be helpful.
5. Share.
6. Listen without interrupting.
7. Treat everyone as you would a friend.
8. Never use put downs or call names.
10. Be nice, kind, and caring.
CAEC Institute

When: Saturday, March 22, 2003
8:30 am to 3:30 pm

Where: Boston University School of Management*
595 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

Working from the CAEC's guiding texts, Building Character in Schools (Ryan and Bohlin, 1999) and its companion Resource Guide (Bohlin, Farmer and Ryan, 2001), our one-day Institute explores the following:

- the context of character education
- moral motivation
- curriculum integration
- strategic planning

Our Institutes are designed for educators who are beginning to think seriously about the ethical implications of their leadership in classrooms and schools. We invite schools or districts to send teams of teachers or administrators responsible for school leadership or professional development (e.g., lead teachers, curriculum coordinators, principals, superintendents).

CAEC Spring Institute Application Form

Saturday, March 22, 2003
8:30 am to 3:30 pm

$225 first participant, $200 each additional participant

Name(s) and positions of participants (indicate contact person):

1. __________________________ School/District __________________________
2. __________________________ Address __________________________
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Fax __________________________ E-mail __________________________

* Directions and a parking pass will be mailed to all registrants.

Please return this form to: The Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, 621 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215, or fax to 617.353.4351. For more info: 617.353.3262 or caec@bu.edu.

www.bu.edu/education/caec
Honesty quotes

If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything.
— Mark Twain

Listen for the “sound of the genuine” in yourself and others.
— Marian Wright Edelman

Honesty is the first chapter of the book of wisdom.
— Thomas Jefferson

Truth is not always popular, but it is always right.
— Anonymous

Confidence in others’ honesty is no light testimony to one’s own integrity.
— Montaigne

Truth burns up error.
— Sojourner Truth

Be true to your work, your word, and your friend.
— Henry David Thoreau

Upcoming Events in Character Education

Fall 2002
Materials distributed and registration accepted for Laws of Life Essay Program
For more information contact:
Contact Peggy Veljkovic
Director, Laws of Life Essay Contest
John Templeton Foundation
Five Radnor Corporate Center
Suite 100
Radnor, PA 19087 USA
Telephone 1.800.245.1285 (US only)
or 610.687.8942
Fax 610.687.8961
E-mail lawssoftlife@templeton.org

CAEC Spring Institute. See page 9 for details.

April 23 – 26, 2003. Minneapolis, MN.
14th Annual National Service-Learning Conference.
Contact National Youth Leadership Council
Telephone 1.800.366.6952
Fax 651.999.7399
E-mail nslc@nylc.org
Website www.nylc.org

Books that bring Honesty to life

The Boy Who Cried Wolf, Aesop
A Bargain for Frances, Russell Hoban

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle, Avi
The Giver, Lois Lowry

Nothing But the Truth, Avi
The Tale of Peter Rabbit, Beatrix Potter

On My Honor, Marion Dane Bauer
Shiloh, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

Pinocchio, Carlo Collodi
Holes, Louis Sachar
MEMBERSHIP Form

Please use this form to initiate, renew, or update your membership.

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CAEC
621 Commonwealth Ave.
Boston, MA 02215

Name

Occupation, Title, or Position

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Telephone [ ] work [ ] home

Friend of the CAEC ($60): Quarterly newsletter, occasional mailings.
[ ] New membership
[ ] Renewal

ASCD Character Education Network ($20): Quarterly newsletter, occasional mailings.
[ ] New membership
[ ] Renewal

[ ] Additional contributions $________________________

Please make checks payable to CAEC.

Note: $40 of each Friend of the CAEC membership is tax-deductible. We are a non-profit organization that relies on grants and the generosity of its members. Any additional tax-deductible contribution you make to the CAEC is both needed and greatly appreciated.
Films about high school are becoming as ubiquitous as twenty-something sitcoms. With a few exceptions [Mr. Holland’s Opus and Dead Poet’s Society], they invariably portray high schools and their classrooms as adolescent playgrounds overseen by banal and inept misfits masquerading as teachers. The Emperor’s Club is a welcome departure for these teenager fantasy-feeding embarrassments. It is, believe it or not, about education. Indeed, it is about the school’s oldest and most critical mission, the education of character.

Kevin Kline plays the film’s central character, Mr. Hundert, the Western Civilization teacher and assistant headmaster of St. Benedict’s, a tony prep school for privileged boys. The plot centers on Mr. Hundert’s moral struggles with a new student, the son of a powerful and arrogant senator. The boy is rebellious, but charismatic and gradually undermines Mr. Hundert’s class and the strict discipline of the school.

The movie takes place in two time periods, separated by twenty-five years, presumably the mid-70s and the present. The key incident is an annual contest among the Western Civilization students run by Hundert to award a valued prize given to the student who publicly demonstrates the greatest mastery of the ancient world. Bell, the corrupt student, cheats and Hundert, who in the midst of the contest realizes it, is told by the headmaster to ignore it. Twenty-five years later, when Bell is rich and successful, and about to launch his own senatorial run, he brings his former teacher and classmates together for a reenactment of the contest and to secure the support of his friends for his campaign.

Behind this engaging plot, however, is a refreshing picture of what high school education ought to be: a forging of intellectual growth and character formation. Mr. Hundert’s classroom is a small universe where students engage the world’s wisdom and where they are challenged to moral greatness. Mr. Hundert comfortably and completely embodies the Socratic ideal of the teacher: to help students become both smart and good, people of both intellect and character. In a key scene with Bell’s senator father, the senator asks Hundert what he thinks he is doing. Surprised, Hundert says he is concerned with the formation of the boy’s character. The senator dismissively tells Hundert to just give him the facts and he’ll take care of his son’s character. In this, the film captures the emptiness of so much of American education, where education has been reduced to a meritocratic transfer of information and teachers are reduced to mere facilitators of the process.

While an engaging and well acted film, The Emperor’s Club serves larger purposes: it reminds us what a noble profession teaching can be and what the essence of an education is all about.
HONESTY

By Sanford N. McDonnell

In public opinion surveys Americans time and again rate honesty as one of the most important virtues a person can have. Surveys of high school students agree with that high rating, and yet these same young people admit to behaving dishonestly — i.e. lying, cheating and stealing — at epidemic levels.

We in the business world do not want school graduates or people of any age as our employees, who are brilliant, have great intellectual knowledge or have developed highly creative minds if they are dishonest. Successful corporations consider honesty in its employees throughout the organization to be absolutely essential for survival. Our customers won’t want to do business with us, no one will want to work for us, and our suppliers won’t want to sell to us if they can’t trust us to be honest in all we do. It is not only the right way — it is also the smartest way to treat everyone.

In the long run no relationship whether it is in business or with friends or family can long survive if it is not based on being honest with one another.

- Sanford N. McDonnell is chairman emeritus of the McDonnell Douglas Corp.

Upcoming EVENTS in CHARACTER EDUCATION

(continued)

April 29 and 30, 2003. Milford, CT. Connecticut’s Fifth Annual Assets-Based Character Education Conference

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To our **READERS**

We want to hear from you!

The strength of this newsletter depends on the active contribution of its readers. Our readers need to hear what's happening in your school or community. (That's what our “From the Trenches” section is all about.)

We welcome submissions of any kind: letters, articles, anecdotes. What has worked in your classroom, home, or school? What has inspired your dedication to character education? We also encourage recommendations for our Selected Bibliography and Character Quotes.

The next issue will spotlight **SELF-MASTERY**. The deadline for our next issue is **December 30**. Please address all such correspondence to:

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